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COUNTRY Cuba

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to Strengthen the Regime

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Appraisal of Content: 2.

1. The great mass of Cuban people believe that the hour of decision is at hand and that the survival of the CASTRO regime is in balance. They expect an invasion to take place before mid-April 1961 and place great reliance in it.
2. The CASTRO regime is steadily losing popularity, and the lack of enthusiasm of the Cuban people is reflected in Habana, where housewives and servants must stand in line for hours to obtain such necessities as soap and lard. Cuban women have become the leaders of opposition activity and urge their husbands to undertake action to alleviate the present situation. The people have begun to lose their fear of the government, and subtle sabotage is common. People deliberately break beer bottles and glasses, knowing that the government cannot replace them, and no one uses change, so that small commercial transactions have become hopelessly involved. CASTRO has said publicly that people who stand in line to purchase scarce items are counterrevolutionaries because they are trying to show that the government cannot provide. As a result nearly everyone stands in line; lines at grocery stores can be seen extending for four to five blocks. Church attendance is at an all-time high as a demonstration of opposition to the government.
3. Travelers through the interior of Cuba have reported that the disenchantment of the masses has spread through all the provinces. Spokesmen of opposition groups say that Santiago de Cuba and all of Oriente Province is seething with hate. For oppositionists Santiago is the easiest city in Cuba in which to operate. Workers there readily give all the support they can, including hiding underground leaders in their homes. Very few of the aims of the Cuban revolution have passed on to the Cuban masses. The salary of cane-cutters has been cut about fifty per cent; fishermen must sell their catch to the National Institute for Agrarian Reform at low prices and are paid in script which they consider valueless. Consequently, it is difficult to buy fish, and the fishermen try every means to sell their products illegally on the free or black market. Many government housing units have been constructed, but few are occupied. The reason in some cases is that poor planning or lack of supplies has led to failure to install plumbing and sewage facilities.

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4. The defection of Jose PARDO Llada, CASTRO propagandist and news commentator, has been discussed in all walks of life and is regarded as highly significant. Although everyone is aware that PARDO is a complete opportunist, it is also known that he often has the ability to predict the future and change his political affiliations. The ranks of the oppositionists will increase as more and more Cubans seek a means to join the "winning side."
5. It is impossible to estimate the number of arms which have now passed into private hands. It is easy to obtain a gun in Habana; weapons, usually rifles, are furnished by underground organizations. No one wishes to cache any extensive amount of arms because of the difficulty in hiding them successfully.
6. It is generally believed that the Cuban Army has been successfully penetrated by opposition groups and that it will not fight in the event of a showdown. It is also certain that the police, who despise the militia, will not fight. The morale of the militia is falling. They have shown little wish to fight the opposition forces in the Escambray area of central Cuba, and some have been jailed for refusal to go to combat areas. Both militiamen and women try to find any excuse to wear civilian clothing, possibly because members of the opposition have been killing and wounding militia members in the streets and alleys of Habana and taking away their weapons. The government has had to disarm most of the women's militia because opposition groups were taking their weapons away from them.
7. As a result of the evident lack of support for the regime among the armed forces and the militia, CASTRO appears to have shifted his trust to the Asociacion de Jovenes Rebeldes (AJR, Rebel Youth Association)² which is composed of a large number of teen-agers from the lower classes. AJR members, uniformed and armed with Czech machine-guns, are arrogant and mean and are feared by the Cuban populace. They are fiercely loyal to CASTRO because of their new-found notoriety and pay. The AJR is divided into military-type platoons and trained in military tactics. AJR members are used to show the force of the government at rallies and demonstrations and also in attacks upon Catholics. Parents of members resent the formation of the AJR because it has brought about loss of parental control and respect.
8. CASTRO's decree of 1961 as the "Year of Education" and his order for closing all schools on 15 April and sending the students to rural areas to teach the farmers has caused much resentment among certain groups. Parents, especially of female students, do not want to send their children to rural areas to risk their health and lose the effects of their parental upbringing. Operators of private schools, whose fixed expenses will continue during the period of suspension of school, fear they will become bankrupt and be forced to ask the government to assume the operation of the school.
9. Habana is filled with Soviet, Satellite, and Communist Chinese nationals, who appear to be living comfortably at government expense, probably part of the barter plan between Cuba and bloc countries. Through an arrangement with the government these nationals do not have to pay for expenses in public places but only sign a bill, which the owner of the establishment must present to the government for reimbursement. Cuban employees do not like this procedure because it eliminates tipping and the owners of the establishment are uncertain over their reimbursement. Soviet and Satellite officers are assigned to Cuban Government offices. Chinese are more of a mystery to the Cubans, since they are seen in large numbers but their function is not known. It is speculated that they are working largely in the Chinese colony, that they are assigned to government agricultural co-operatives in the interior of the country, or that they are helping the militia in the Escambray as instructors in guerrilla warfare.
10. The military camp at Managua is probably the most important one in the Habana area; it is a central depot for cargos arriving on Soviet ships. The cargos are unloaded by Soviet crews under maximum security on to trucks covered with

canvas. The convoy route is guarded by militiamen stationed at 25-yard intervals. On one occasion a canvas covering blew off a truck, and oblong boxes, approximately 25 feet long and two feet square, were observed. The airfield at Campo Libertad has recently become a maximum security area and is protected by fences, searchlights, and constantly-manned .50-caliber machine-gun emplacements.

Headquarters Comments

1. [REDACTED]

2. [REDACTED]

Joel MUJICA, president of the AJR, left Habana in late February to attend the meetings in Helsinki of the international preparatory committee of the Eighth World Youth Festival, after which he went to Moscow at the invitation of Soviet youth organizations.

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